

# “Occupy the Dream”: Black Church Revives the Civil Rights Movement.

By [Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.](#)

Global Research, January 02, 2012

2 January 2012

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*One of my favorite mentors and colleagues in the Civil Rights Movement continues to be The Reverend Dr. C.T. Vivian. Whenever I am asked the question, “What is the movement?”*

I always first quote Dr. Vivian who once affirmed, “The movement is about moving people. If people do not become active and move, then there is no movement. The Civil Rights Movement is about the organizing, mobilizing and the movement of people forward to fulfill the civil rights agenda in our lifetime. Thus this is about getting people to move in the present to affect the future reality of freedom, justice and equality for all.”

It is important here to note that the Black Church in America has always been and continues to be the “backbone” of the historical movements for change across the nation. Such was the case in the heart of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950’s and the 1960’s. The “Movement” was in a sense a participatory opportunity for people of faith to live out and express their faith in the God of justice and liberation. In a paraphrase of the eloquent words of the renowned theologian, Dr. James H. Cone, the God of the oppressed calls for people of faith to take action to liberate humanity from all forms of oppression. As we witness today the steady growth and expansion of the Occupy Movement for economic justice and equality in many cities throughout the United States, it is very encouraging to see young and senior Black church leaders step forward to provide strategic vision and prophetic leadership for Occupy the Dream as an important rising constituent of Occupy Wall Street.

In a glaring socioeconomic contradiction, the inequities and inequalities between 1% of people who control the wealth of the nation versus 99% of people who are increasingly being challenged with economic hardship and injustice, it is a sign of the times in which we live to witness a diverse coalition of protestors jell into a national transformative movement for economic and social justice. Occupy Wall Street transcends race, ethnicity, and class status, and other social divisions in our society. Many see the emergence of what Dr. King predicted would eventually happen: the building of the “beloved community” of equality, empowerment and economic justice for all.

Black church leaders are proactively responding to help revive the movement in the spirit and living legacy of the dream of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King’s dream of equality for all was also focused on the questions of economic justice and equity. Occupy the Dream is the revitalization of the Civil Rights Movement. It is a national revival. It is to renew of struggle for freedom, justice, economic equality and empowerment. This should also be seen as good news for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) as it regains and repositions the historic organization of Black clergy lead and co-founded by Dr.

King. Occupy the Dream is an initiative put forth by Black church leaders across denominational lines from the AME, AME Zion, CME, COGIC, UCC, UMC, and UPC to the Progressive National Baptist Convention together with independent or nondenominational churches located in cities and towns across the nation.

I am so proud of the leadership of The Reverend Dr. Jamal Bryant of Baltimore's Empowerment Temple AME for serving effectively as the National Spokesperson for Occupy the Dream. Check out [www.occupydream.org](http://www.occupydream.org).

We remember that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr gave his last address to the National Convention of SCLC in August 1967 entitled, "Where Do We Go From Here?" In that speech Dr. King wrestled with the issues of "income inequality" and economic injustice. Dr. King stated, "First, we must massively assert our dignity and worth. We must stand up amid a system that still oppresses us ...Now another basic challenge is to discover how to organize our strength into economic and political power...The dignity of the individual will flourish when the decisions concerning his life are in his own hands, when he has the assurance that his income is stable and certain, and when he knows that he has the means to seek self-improvement." Months later Dr. King and SCLC would issue a national call for the Poor Peoples Campaign for economic justice and equality to occupy Washington, DC in 1968.

2012 will be a test for the United States. There will be a political test in terms of how millions of people will vote for the future. There will also be an economic test between the 99% and the 1% on the issues of income inequality and economic justice. The Black church has responded to the moral challenge to join with others to change and transform America for the uplift and empowerment of all people.

Occupy the Dream on January 16, 2012 at 10:am will gather church members and other committed people in a nonviolent protest at Federal Reserve Banks to challenge the prevailing economic inequalities that have become so commonplace for most Americans. It's revival time. See the list of addresses for the Federal Reserve Banks at [www.occupydream.org](http://www.occupydream.org).

It is time to occupy Dr. King's dream. We are grateful to Presiding AME Bishop John Bryant, Progressive National Baptist Convention President Reverend Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore, Bishop Millicent Hunter and numerous other Black church leaders for standing up and helping to lead Occupy the Dream.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is National Director of Occupy the Dream, President of Education Online Services Corporation and CEO of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network (HSAN)

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